

News Release

For immediate release

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IDEM offers reminders for managing debris and waste when flood waters recede

IDEM's emergency spill line telephone number is 1-888-233-7745

As flood waters start to recede, thousands of Hoosier homeowners and business owners face the difficult task of cleaning up. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) offers reminders for the safe management and disposal of debris and damaged property.

“This is a very difficult time for those affected by the storms, and entire communities will need to work together to manage the huge amount of debris we would expect from such an emergency,” said IDEM Commissioner Thomas Easterly. “We also encourage all residents to notify local emergency management officials about oil spills or releases of hazardous substances or call IDEM’s toll free spill line at 1-888-233-7745.”

Many local and county level agencies set up special collections. Soil, clean wood and clean building materials often may be segregated for recycling or disposal at landfills that accept construction and demolition waste. Residents can help by separating solid waste for disposal from construction debris. Communities and local officials may contact Charles Grady in IDEM’s Office of Land Quality with questions about emergency debris management, at (317) 308-3115. Questions about emergency burning should be directed to the following staff members in IDEM’s Office of Air Quality: Patrick Powlen at (317) 695-6439 and David Rice at (317) 502-2251. Fact sheets for emergency debris management and emergency burning are available on IDEM’s website at <http://www.in.gov/idem/5504.htm>.

Extreme caution should be taken when entering flood-damaged structures and while working around debris. By wearing protective gloves, safety glasses and safe shoes, staying out of unsafe structures, and protecting children and pets, the risk of injuries is reduced.

Dispose of items that can’t be disinfected or recycled, such as flood-soaked drywall and insulation, mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and most paper products.

In communities working to separate waste, it is recommended that household hazardous waste be kept in original containers. This includes: paints, paint thinners, turpentine, furniture strippers, wood preservatives, stains and finishes; pesticides, insecticides, flea collars and sprays, roach and ant killers, rat and mouse poisons and herbicides; household cleaners such as oven, toilet, drain, rug and upholstery cleaners, bleaches, disinfectants, mothballs, ammonia-based and powdered cleansers, floor and furniture polish; automotive products such as antifreeze, transmission and brake fluids and motor oil; lawn and garden care products and pool chemicals; paint products and beauty products such as nail polish.

Not all household hazardous waste will need to be discarded. Most cleaners and products used around the home come in sturdy plastic containers that can be tightly sealed. Products in properly closed containers may have survived the flood so it is advised that only damaged or ruined products be thrown away.

Follow these tips when discarding prescription medications contaminated by flood water. Tablets or capsules should be dissolved in the original container with a small amount of water. For liquid medications, add sawdust, kitty litter or flour, if available, to the original container. Labels from prescription bottles should be removed or patient information should be completely marked out. Lids should be placed tightly on the containers and put in a heavy-duty sealed bag as tight lids and sealed bags will keep medications from leaking. The sealed bag may be placed in the trash so that it is not visible to prevent unintended use or contact.

For the latest storm damage information, visit the Indiana Department of Homeland Security website at <http://www.in.gov/gov/3725.htm>.

About IDEM

IDEM (<http://www.idem.IN.gov>) implements federal and state regulations regarding the environment. Through compliance assistance, incentive programs and educational outreach, the agency encourages and aids businesses and citizens in protecting Hoosiers and our environment.

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